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BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER



ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH  
FOR THE YEAR 1942.

G.H. PRINGLE, M.R.C.S. (Eng.), L.R.C.P. (Lond.) D.P.H.  
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH



BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL  
OFFICER OF HEALTH, FOR 1942.

Health Department,  
Town Hall,  
Bridgwater.

August, 1943.

TO:

THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN & BURGESSES OF THE BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting to you my second Annual Report on the health of the Borough, which is in the same abbreviated form as its predecessor. In accordance with the recommendations of the Ministry of Health certain statistics and other information cannot be published at the present time.

The outstanding administrative improvement during the year was the establishment at the Town Hall of a single office for the combined appointment of Medical Officer of Health to the Bridgwater Borough and Rural District Councils. The establishment of this office has centralised the work, and as many of the Public Health problems that arise are common to both areas one centre of administration is essential. The clerical work in connection with my appointment as an Assistant Medical Officer to the Somerset County Council is also dealt with at this office and by this means excellent coordination with the County Health Department is maintained.

This internal reorganisation involved almost a complete rearrangement of all records and filing systems, but I am pleased to report that mainly due to the efforts of my clerk Miss H.M. Baker, the office machinery was running smoothly before the end of the year.

The report that follows is only an outline of some of the activities of the Public Health Department, but after the war one hopes to be able to publish a full account of the work and progress which has been made.

I have to express my thanks to the Chairman and Members of the Health Committee for their support, to Mr. Lean, the Sanitary Inspector, for his willing collaboration, and to the Heads of other Departments for their assistance throughout the year.

I am, Sir, Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

G.H. PRINGLE.

# 1. VITAL STATISTICS.

## REGISTERED BIRTHS.

		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Live Births - Legitimate		195	204	399
do. - Illegitimate		16	10	26
		211	214	425
		<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>
Still Births - Legitimate		5	10	15
do. - Illegitimate		2	-	2
		7	10	17
		<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>

## DEATHS.

325 deaths were registered as having occurred in the Borough during the year. After deducting the deaths of 86 non-residents and adding the deaths of 40 normal residents which took place outside the Borough, the net total comes to 279 Bridgwater deaths. Of these 149 were males and 130 females.

1942

## CAUSES OF DEATH

Males Females

	All causes	...	...	Total	325	149	130
1. Typhoid and para-typhoid fevers	-					-	-
2. Cerebro-spinal fever	-					-	-
3. Scarlet fever	-					-	-
4. Whooping Cough	-					-	-
5. Diphtheria	-					-	-
6. Tuberculosis of respiratory system	7					7	7
7. Other forms of tuberculosis	2					2	-
8. Syphilitic diseases	2					2	-
9. Influenza	2					2	-
10. Measles	-					-	-
11. Acute poliomyelitis and polioencephalitis	-					-	-
12. Acute infantile encephalitis	-					-	-
13. Cancer of buccal cavity and oesophagus (M) uterus (F)	1					1	3
14. Cancer of stomach and duodenum	-					-	7
15. Cancer of breast	-					-	3
16. Cancer of all other sites	16					16	9
17. Diabetes	2					2	-
18. Intra-cranial vascular lesions	12					12	8
19. Heart Disease	30					30	28
20. Other diseases of the circulatory system	4					4	3
21. Bronchitis	9					9	4
22. Pneumonia	4					4	6
23. Other respiratory diseases	4					4	3
24. Ulcer of stomach or duodenum	4					4	2
25. Diarrhoea under 2 years	3					3	-
26. Appendicitis	-					-	2
27. Other digestive diseases	4					4	3
28. Nephritis	8					8	2

## CAUSES OF DEATH

1942

Males Females

29. Puerperal and post-abortion sepsis	-	-
30. Other maternal causes	-	2
31. Premature births	2	2
32. Congenital malformations, birth injuries, infantile diseases	4	4
33. Suicide	1	1
34. Road traffic accidents	3	-
35. Other violent causes	9	5
36. All other causes	16	26

INFANTILE MORTALITYMale    Female    Total

Deaths of children under 1 year

- Legitimate	9	7	16
Illegitimate	1	-	1
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	10	7	17
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

II. INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The following table sets out the cases in the Borough notified during 1942:-

<u>DISEASE</u>	<u>TOTAL CASES, NOTIFIED</u>
Acute Poliomyelitis	-
Cerebro-spinal meningitis	-
Diphtheria	4
Dysentery	-
Enteric fever (including paratyphoid)	-
Erysipelas	2
Measles	29
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	-
Pneumonia	12
Puerperal Pyrexia	4
Scarlet Fever	10
Small Pox	-
Whooping Cough	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>
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The freedom from any serious outbreak of infectious disease during the year is most gratifying. The last weeks of the year saw the commencement of an epidemic of measles, which was widespread but mild in character.

III. TUBERCULOSIS

There were 36 cases of respiratory and 4 cases of non-respiratory tuberculosis notified during the year.

The number of pulmonary cases is nine in excess of the previous year's notifications.

War-time conditions are often stated to be associated with an increase in tuberculosis, but whether this is a major factor or not, I am of the opinion that the improved facilities for diagnosis (mass radiography etc.) will, in all probability, result in an upward trend in notifications, as many cases will be discovered in an early stage of the disease that might have remained latent for a considerable time.

#### IV. CONTAGIOUS SKIN DISEASES ETC.

The incidence of scabies at the beginning of the year was high, but the increased facilities for treatment at the Old Isolation Hospital proved adequate. There was a gradual diminution in the number of cases during the year, and at the time of writing this report (August 1943) the situation is very satisfactory, although it is impossible to forecast to what extent this improvement is likely to be permanent, as outside factors such as movements of population play an important part.

The number of Borough cases treated at the Old Isolation Hospital was as follows:-

Male Adults	85
Female Adults	128
Children	393
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	611
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#### The Scabies Order, 1941.

This Order gives Medical Officers of Health wide powers to deal not only with scabies, but with verminous persons generally. Informal action was taken in respect of 13 persons during the year, and each case finally co-operated with the Department, thus avoiding the necessity of resorting to the drastic measures required by the Order.

#### V. DIPHTHERIA IMMUNISATION.

The following table shows the number of children who completed a full course of immunisation during the year:-

Age under 5 years	Age 5 - 15 years	Total
476	435	911

27 children were Sibick tested for susceptibility.

The percentages of the child population in the Borough considered immunised at the end of the year were:-

Under 5 years	41%
5 - 15 years	74%

This is a great improvement on the results of the previous year, but the percentage immunised in the pre-school group is far too low. In order to achieve comparative safety, at least 80 per cent of the child population must be protected.

A special session for this protective inoculation work is held weekly at the School Clinic, Albert Street. This excellent arrangement is widely advertised and it is to be hoped that the apparent parental apathy to this important preventive measure will gradually disappear.

## VI. HOUSING

The Housing situation has continued to deteriorate during the year. Cases are continually coming to my notice where young families are being brought up in conditions which are quite incompatible with positive health. Overcrowding often exists, and medical advice to the effect that cases of tuberculosis should occupy separate bedrooms is seldom possible.

Under existing circumstances there seems to be no remedy, but it is satisfactory to note that the Ministry of Health has asked Local Authorities to formulate plans so as to be in a position to make a quick start immediately conditions permit.

## VII. WATER SUPPLY

The Water Supply for the Borough has been adequate, and the regular samples have proved that, after chlorination, the bacteriological condition has been satisfactory.

## VIII. SWIMMING BATHS

During the whole season strict supervision was maintained over the condition of the water in the swimming baths, and regulations were drawn up to check any overcrowding in the dressing cubicles.

It must be admitted that the baths are not modern, but by the regular use of chlorine preparations controlled by colorimetric analysis, it was found possible to maintain the water in a reasonably satisfactory bacteriological state of purity. Such a method is, of course, extremely crude and cannot be compared with the filtration and chlorination plants that exist in modern swimming baths.

## IX. SPECIAL WAR-TIME ACTIVITIES

During the year the Health Department has continued to deal with a large amount of work in connection with Civil Defence, the Evacuation Scheme and other aspects of war work. The details of these activities must be withheld until the war is over.



A N N U A L R E P O R T  
O F T H E C HIEF SANITARY INSPECTOR.

To:

The Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Bridgwater.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1942. This report is of necessity very curtailed and no mention is made of Civil Defence activities.

Complaints.

During the year 153 complaints were received and dealt with under the Public Health or Housing Acts. This is a decrease of 54 in comparison with the figure for 1941.

In only 4 cases were Statutory Notices served and in one instance was it necessary to take legal proceedings.

Housing.

98 houses were inspected for the purpose of having housing defects remedied, no systematic house-to-house inspections being carried out. A list of the defects found and remedied is given in the summary at the end of the Report.

Owing to the shortage of labour and materials it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure adequate repairs and in most cases it has become impossible to give a time limit in which repairs must be carried out.

Some of the houses scheduled for demolition prior to September 1939 are deteriorating and steps may have to be taken to close the houses and rehouse the tenants.

Overcrowding.

Overcrowding is on the increase and because of war-time conditions it is almost impossible to secure abatement except in the most serious cases.

Verminous Premises.

There has been an increase in the number of houses found to be verminous from 14 in 1941 to 22 in 1942, and this increase is being maintained during the early part of 1943. War-time conditions are in my opinion to blame for this increase and the shortage of insecticides is aggravating the position.

The steam disinfection of firewatchers' bedding has been carried out free of charge and this has necessitated the disinfectors being worked on four days a week.

Meat and Foods.

Under the Government Scheme, slaughtering is carried out at Weston-super-Mare, and therefore the only meat inspection is that of pigs for home consumption, casualties

and the inspection of meat at the butchers' shops.

A big increase in the amount of other foods condemned has taken place and in this connection over 200 visits have been paid to grocers and similar shops. The following quantities of food have been condemned:-

Beef	1 cwt.	81 lbs.
Mutton		64 lbs.
Offal		25 lbs.
Net Fish	5 cwt.	92 lbs.
Poultry	2 carcasses	
Canned Fish	105 tins	
Canned Meat	955 tins	
Canned Fruit	121 tins	
Canned Vegetables	297 tins	
Canned Soup	144 tins	
Canned Milk	767 tins	
Fish and Meat Paste	5 jars	
Pickles	8 jars	
Fresh Fruit	1 cwt.	13 lbs.
Cheese		24 lbs.
Bacon		40 lbs.
Vegetables		16 lbs.
Lard.		24 lbs.
Butter		11 lbs.
Margarine		5 lbs.
Sugar		12 lbs.
Jam		52 lbs.
Dried Fruit		82 lbs.
Flour		38 lbs.
Custard Powder	76 tins	
Cake		8 lbs.
Cereals	3 packets	
Sweets		8 lbs.
Sauce	1 tin	
Fruit Pulp	10 cwt.	
Bottled Fruit	4 bottles	

#### Staff.

The appointment of additional Sanitary Inspector is still vacant, but will have to be filled in time to deal with post-war duties.

The position of Clerk has been filled by no fewer than three persons during the year. Miss Hetherington the present Clerk has proved to be a very willing member of the staff and is giving every satisfaction.

#### SUMMARY

##### Inspections made during the year.

##### General Sanitation.

Water Supply	26
Drainage	121
Common Lodging Houses	2
Houses let in lodgings	6
Factories	46
Tents, Vans and Sheds	1
Outworkers	3
Public Conveniences	9
Theatres and Places of Entertainment	2

Rats and Mice	189
Shops	198
Swimming Baths	45
Miscellaneous	120

### Housing

Houses inspected under Public Health Acts	98
Visits paid to the above houses	303
Houses inspected under Housing Acts	-
Visits paid to the above houses	-
Houses inspected in connection with overcrowding	6
Visits paid to the above houses	11
Verminous premises inspected	22
Visits paid to the above premises	45
Miscellaneous	9

### Infectious Disease

Inquiries in cases of Infectious Disease	11
Visits re disinfection	69
Miscellaneous	4

### Meat and Food Inspection

Visits to Slaughterhouses	26
Visits to Shops and Stalls	36
Visits to other premises for meat inspection	58
Visits to Butchers	72
Visits to Fishmongers and Poulterers	12
Visits to Grocers	208
Visits to Greengrocers and Fruitcrers	7
Visits to Confectioners	10
Visits to Bakehouses	21
Visits to Fried Fish Shops	7
Visits to Cowsheds	23
Visits to Dairies and Milk Shops	42
Visits to Ice Cream Premises	19
Visits to Restaurants	7
Visits to Food Preparing Premises	38
Visits in connection with Sampling	
Milk Bacteriological	14
Milk Tubercle Bacilli	6
Miscellaneous	68

### Explosives

Visits in connection with explosives	5
Visits in connection with petroleum spirit	25

### Work Done

Complaints investigated	153
Additional water closets provided	2
Choked drains and sewers cleared	41
Drains relaid	3
Drains repaired	7
Inspection chambers provided	3
Defective water closets repaired	16
Defective roofs repaired	18
Defective windows repaired	10
Defective eavesgutters and downpipes repaired	12

Defective walls repaired	1
Defective plastering repaired	8
Defective firegrates and ranges repaired	11
Defective coppers repaired	1
Defective doors repaired	2
Defective chimneys repaired	4
Defective flush cisterns repaired or renewed	4
Defective ceilings repaired	12
Defective washhouses repaired	1
Defective scullery troughs repaired or renewed	5
Defective staircases repaired	4
Defective scullery waste pipes repaired	2
Defective floors repaired	5
Dampness remedied	3
Ceilings whitened	31
Rooms distempered or papered	30
Nuisances from the keeping of animals abated	1
Foul accumulations removed	8
Overcrowding abated	1
Vermicious premises cleansed	16
Premises disinfested from rats or mice	62
Houses cleansed	1

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Your obedient servant,

R.K. LEAN,

Chief Sanitary Inspector.